

The New Offensive and our tasks

To all Members of the Communist Party

DEAR COMRADES,

A new situation in the war has opened out. One which raises the greatest opportunities, but also the greatest responsibilities for the British people and our Party.

This new situation is characterised by the launching of the Anglo-American offensive in Northern Africa; the successful Soviet holding of Stalingrad; the rising confidence and enthusiasm of the United Nations as they see the defensive phase beginning to give place to the offensive, and the confident note of Soviet utterances (but also implicit warning and emphasis of urgency) with regard to the favourable possibilities of a concerted Allied offensive.

At the same time the speeches of Stalin on November 6 and of Churchill on November 11 have thrown further light on the question of the Second Front and the urgent issue of strategy now before the United Nations.

Our Party needs to respond with whole-hearted energy and without delay to this new situation in order to carry through its positive campaign and leadership in the decisive phase of the war which is now developing. Any tendency during recent weeks to lag behind, or to fail to see what is new, must now be speedily overcome in order to be equal to the great responsibilities which now fall to us.

From the Defensive to the Offensive

The great significance of the offensive which began in Egypt and has now extended over Northern Africa is that it marks the beginning of a change-over to an offensive strategy of Britain and the

United States in place of the previous inaction.

Far-reaching possibilities open out from this offensive. The whole question of the Second Front in Europe—which continues to be more urgent, and not less urgent—needs to be approached in a new and positive fashion in relation to this offensive.

What would appear to be the objectives of this offensive?

First, that the aim is to drive the Nazis and the Italians out of Egypt, Libya and the whole of North Africa, and through this regain control of the Mediterranean, and all that this would mean from the point of view of communications.

Secondly, to drive Italy out of the war, either by direct blows leading to a crushing military defeat for Italy, or by forcing Italy to sue for a separate peace.

Third, it has been clearly indicated in a number of semi-official utterances, that, while this offensive is recognised as not yet the Second Front, it is regarded as opening the way towards it, and is bound profoundly to affect the position in relation to France and the Vichy Government.

We welcome the successes that have already been won, and we will do everything in our power to make it possible for complete success to be achieved for the full strategical objectives that are being sought.

The New Offensive and the Second Front

The fact that the new offensive has been opened in Africa and not in Europe is indicative of the divergences which exist in the strategy of the United Nations.

ions, and shows how little we have yet approached to that unified allied strategy which will have to be adopted if Fascism is to be finally defeated.

The new offensive is not yet the Second Front. That can only take place when it is organised in Europe, and when the united forces of Britain and the Soviet Union and America are all striking their blows at the same time against Hitler from the East and West of Europe.

This has been the fundamental basis upon which all our Party campaigns have been conducted, and remains in the new situation what we will still ceaselessly fight to become the policy of the Government.

Comrade Stalin in that part of his speech dealing with the Second Front, clearly revealed that the Second Front in Europe could have defeated Hitler this year. He stated:—

“Let us assume that a Second Front existed in Europe, as it existed in the first World War, and that a Second Front diverted, let us say, sixty German divisions and twenty divisions of Germany's allies. What would have been the position of the German troops on our front then?”

“It is not difficult to guess that their position would have been deplorable. More than that, it would have been the beginning of the end of the German Fascist troops, for in that case the Red Army would not be where it is now, but somewhere near Pskov, Minsk, Zhitomir and Odessa.

“That means that in the summer of this year the German Fascist army would already have been on the verge of disaster. If that has not occurred, it is because the Germans were saved by the absence of a Second Front in Europe.”

The Prime Minister's Speech

Mr. Churchill's apologia for the failure to establish the Second Front in Europe in 1942 did not attempt to controvert this clear statement of the facts.

The pledge with regard to “the

urgent task of creating a Second Front in Europe in 1942” was universally regarded by the British, American and Soviet peoples and by the European peoples and the nations of the world, as a pledge to be honoured. The subsequent explanation that it was a ruse to mislead the enemy cannot wipe out this colossal failure to adopt the necessary strategy for victory in 1942. On the contrary, Hitler has publicly boasted that he was not deceived, and that he deliberately took the risk and gambled on the Second Front not being established. On the other hand, the repeated Soviet public statements and emphasis through all these months, and the fact that Mr. Churchill found it necessary in August to travel to Moscow in order to explain the position, are sufficient evidence that there was not a unified strategy and that Soviet strategy regarded as of cardinal importance the establishment of the Second Front in Europe in 1942.

The holding back before the practical difficulties in establishing the Second Front in Europe during the summer and autumn of 1942 meant, in fact, a gamble on the capacity of the Soviet Union to hold out in isolation during all these months—and it is only the miracle of the Soviet achievement which has made possible the present offensive.

The correctness of our Party's campaign is thus all the more strongly proved by Mr. Churchill's statement. But our attention now needs to be concentrated, not on the controversies over the past, but on the present situation and the most rapid and effective utilisation of the present possibilities to secure a unified Allied strategy and the speediest advance to the establishment of a Second Front in Europe.

At the same time, it is now absolutely necessary to understand that the new offensive in Africa increases the favourable possibilities for the establishment of the Second Front in Europe for the following reasons:

First, it increases the confidence and determination of the British and American peoples and armies to come to grips with the Nazi forces; the confidence in their capacity, given the weapons and leadership, to meet and defeat the Nazi armies; and the recognition of the possi-

bility, with the present balance of forces, to take the initiative and land an overseas expedition with success.

Second, the development of the strategy of the offensive in Africa inevitably carries with it conclusions which point to the necessity of extending the action to Europe. The fight against Vichy France in its African Colonies needs to be strengthened by carrying forward the fight with the support of the French people against the Vichy Government in France. The conquest of control in the Mediterranean at once exposes Southern Europe.

In this connection it is important to stress the role which the masses of the European peoples can and will play in this fight. In place of the official attitude which concentrates on a few leading military and naval personalities, such as Giraud or Darlan, it is necessary to bring into the forefront the role which must be played by the Fighting French movement gathered around De Gaulle and the French National Council and the mass movement in France as our strongest allies. This political approach of a peoples' anti-fascist war combines with the strategy of the Second Front.

No Complacency

It is necessary to warn against any feelings of easy optimism, or under-estimation of what is involved in this offensive.

We need to understand that this offensive has got to be won. Any other result would not only be disastrous in its military effect, but could produce a political crisis in Britain which could have the most dangerous consequences. What would be the political consequences of a setback in this offensive? It would be the heavy discrediting of the present Government, Popular anger, because it had not been the Second Front in Europe, and because such a failure would finally condemn the absence of a united allied strategy, would be extreme. Reactionary forces are on the look-out for such a situation in order to take advantage of the weakened prestige of the Government for the purpose of putting through changes which would in fact further delay the organisation of the Second Front in Europe. It could even

lead—unless we are always on guard and winning increased support for our policy—to changes in the Government in which either the pro-fascist elements or a new grouping of purely Empire interests could hold a decisive position, and through which attempts could be made for appeasement.

Therefore, not only from the military point of view do we work to make the new offensive a success, but we do so also because we understand the political implications of a failure.

The African Offensive and the Pro-Fascists

We must defeat the manoeuvres of the pro-Fascists who will endeavour to present the African offensive as an alternative to the Second Front, to counterpose the African offensive and the Second Front, or to declare that in view of the African offensive the Second Front in Europe must now be ruled out as impracticable.

The strength of Fascism is based on the control of Europe and must be defeated in Europe.

The pro-Fascists and Empire isolationists, concentrating their attention on Africa and the Middle East, would be prepared to leave Hitler in control of Europe. It is probable that in the event of Allied success in Northern Africa, and of Hitler's failure to make headway in the East, Hitler may endeavour to appeal to these elements with offers of a compromise peace on the basis of maintenance of his conquests in Europe.

Strengthen the Government

This makes it the more important to support and strengthen the Churchill Government and intensify the fight against the pro-Fascists and for their elimination from the Government.

Whatever criticisms we have to make against the Churchill Government, there is one thing on which we need to be clear. That is that as a Government it does stand for the complete defeat of Hitler and absolutely rules out any ques-

tion of a compromise peace with Fascism. Whatever mistakes it makes, however wrong its strategy may be, its basic issue is the destruction of Hitlerite Germany, and in that aim it is at one with the Soviet Union and the United States of America.

But at the same time the present situation makes it all the more necessary to strengthen the Government, and to press our demand for the replacement of all pro-Fascist and incompetent elements by the most effective democratic anti-fascist representatives who can strengthen the collective leadership of the Government, the drive to establish a unified allied strategy and the Second Front in Europe, and the pursuit of a policy which will most effectively mobilise the full resources, effort, enthusiasm and confidence of the nation for victory.

What We Fight For

Therefore, what should be the essence of our policy in this immediate situation?

To set the example in the way we fight, work and sacrifice to make the African offensive a triumphant success. To obtain not only the maximum production, but to surpass any target that has yet been set in the war industries. To do everything possible to facilitate increasing numbers of women entering war industries, and to strive for a quicker system of upgrading women already in the factories. To call for the organisation of the Second Front in Europe, because once the resources of the United Nations are made the subject of a united strategy, this can be done, even while being in the position of fulfilling all obligations that are demanded from Africa. In this connection it is very important to note recent statements made by responsible Soviet leaders to the effect that great and serious as have been the losses of the Soviet Union this year in territory, resources, foodstuffs, manpower, terrific as the whole strain has been, once a Second Front is opened in Europe, the Soviet Union is still in the position of being able to make a great parallel offensive from the East with its new Red Armies, well equipped and manned.

This is a factor of tremendous im-

portance, and the opening of the offensive in Africa, provides not less but more favourable opportunities for the opening of the Second Front in Europe.

This is what should be made known, and conviction won upon. There is also another aspect of this position that needs to be noted. It is this. The stand of the Soviet Union for the last seventeen months alone against Hitler's main forces, has had a profound effect on the political consciousness of the British people. It has stiffened their morale and capacity for sacrifice. The fight now taking place in Africa, in which British lads are displaying the same high qualities as the Red Army, will increase the morale and spirit of sacrifice among the people.

It is for the Government to know how fully to utilise this, and how it can be organised. For the essence of the new movement is quite plain—the people will never again allow a return to a defensive position in the struggle against fascism.

Develop Hatred Against Fascism

What also needs to be done at this moment, is to revive a great anti-fascist campaign in which it is made clear beyond all doubt what the issue of this anti-fascist people's war is. Namely, that it is directed against fascism and for no other purpose. We have to learn how really to hate fascism. We have to understand what its victory would mean. We have to feel what others who have been conquered by fascism are going through and suffering at the present time. The more this is done, the harder are the blows that will be directed against the pro-fascists, the appeasers, the pacifists, the Trotskyists and I.L.P. elements, all of whom are active and are only permitted to be active because the full foul character of fascism is not yet understood.

There will soon be many thousands of homes in Britain who will be bereaved because of loved ones lost in the great battles now taking place in Egypt. We have to prove that their sacrifices and tears are not going to be in vain, and we have to learn how to direct grief into

hatred against fascism which has caused it, so that the entire war effort as a whole is enormously strengthened.

The whole situation therefore demands from the Communist Party not a turning in on ourselves because the principal aim for which we fought has not yet been adopted as the policy of the Government but to learn how to use what is new and positive in the situation to still further drive ahead for the accomplishment of our aims.

Win the Labour Movement

Now more than ever before we have to win the Labour movement for mass activity. We have to break with the last remnants of sectarianism that exist in our ranks. But also we must avoid only seeing the principal slogans of the Party as being what we have to concentrate upon to the neglect of the daily interests of the masses.

At this new and vital moment in the peoples' war of liberation from the menace of fascism, we have to note serious symptoms of unrest in certain industries, reflecting itself in strikes and talk of strikes.

The Communist Party always fights for the daily interests of the masses and does so in a way that at the same time protects their future interests as well. And never was it so necessary to understand this Marxian principle.

But, there have been tendencies, where in our eagerness to win support for the Second Front as the supreme political and military issue of the war crisis, we have not given sufficient attention to the grievances that undoubtedly arise because of the shortsighted policy of employers and government alike on many economic issues.

The workers have seen us call for sacrifices, as we must, but this has never meant that the sacrifices should be only at their expense and leave the employers untouched. We must not allow the impression to be created that we brush aside local grievances arising from transfer schemes, or reduced earnings because of income tax deductions, and shorter working time in such industries like ship-building where black-

out conditions reduce overtime working. It is vitally important that in every workshop or locality where some issue arises our members shall be in the forefront to fulfil their responsibility of leadership and take it up.

This can be done, because for every strike there are thousands of cases where our Party members have succeeded in getting grievances remedied without any stoppage of production because we acted in time, and showed what can be done through the medium of press publicity, deputations to responsible authorities, taking the matter up in the right manner to the management, production committees, district and executive committees.

Our comrades will find that the current publication of the Party's memorandum on Trade Union policy will very considerably help them in overcoming many of their present difficulties in the factories, pits and shipyards and we must ensure the widest possible circulation for this important statement.

Strengthen the Fight Against Trotskyism

The above is the more important, because any impression of neglect by our Party in this sphere is at once taken advantage of by the Trotskyist and I.L.P. elements, who have been particularly active in exploiting legitimate grievances, not because they want to see them remedied, but because they want to slow down the war effort, and stab the anti-Fascist struggle in the back.

We need to take note of the increased activity and penetration in the factories and Labour movement by Trotskyists and allied elements, whose propaganda, in fact, coincides with the aims of Nazi propaganda. They take advantage of every element of backwardness in the Labour movement. It is necessary to sharpen the exposure of their real role, and to develop the understanding of the wider Labour movement, with regard to this danger. Special further propaganda and educational materials are being prepared on this.

But the strength of our fight against Trotskyist agents and disrupters must above all lie, not only in political ex-

posure of their role, but in the strength of our positive leadership on all the issues, great and small, affecting the workers. Hence the special importance of any tendency, through preoccupation with the mighty life and death issues facing the workers today, to neglect in any degree the day-to-day issues affecting the immediate economic position, working conditions, etc.

Strengthen the Political Activity of the Labour Movement

The issues at stake are too grave to allow us to slow down on winning every conceivable form of united action with the workers organised in other labour bodies than our own. We have to win them if we are to win the war. This is the heart of the problem we have not only to face, but to overcome.

The key to success in overcoming these types of problems is not in the Communist Party alone taking action, but every section of the Labour Movement. This is why in almost every document we put out, the importance of work in the Labour Movement is so strongly stressed.

Victory in this depends above all upon the role the Labour Movement as a whole can be won to play.

The winning of the Labour Movement on the principal issues of war policy also depends upon how we can win the organised workers in the trade unions, Labour Party and Co-operative Movement in connection with the local grievances and issues that from time to time arise.

For where the full pressure of the Labour Movement is exerted, then the more readily can the grievances of the workers be put right.

No one can be satisfied with the present position of the Labour Party, for example. Even its own loyal members are worried as to the role its leaders are playing and the absence of any political campaigning.

Signs are not now wanting to prove that the ceaseless activity of the Com-

munist Party is prodding the Labour leaders to become more politically alive in the country

"Communists Ask For Too Much"

We have had reports also, that sometimes it is said in the factories in regard to our win-the-war policy, "Yes, it is all right but you Communists ask too much from the workers."

This question only arises because of the separation of our political fight as a whole from defending the daily interests of the workers. It is true we call for great sacrifices. It is also true that there has been a splendid response, as the situation in every war industry proves, despite the many weaknesses which still have to be overcome.

But why do we call for these sacrifices? Only in order to save the people from defeat and the destruction of everything that they value and prize in life. To save their wives and children, their homes; to prevent them going into slave labour to be mercilessly exploited for Nazi plunder and profit. To save them from the foul barbaric creed of fascism; its atrocities, its beastliness, its terror, its destruction of every form of labour and progressive organisation.

To prevent the people from being hurled back into the Dark Ages. To enable them to work and stand as free men and women, joyously fighting their way forward to the real new social order of Socialism.

We also remind the workers in industry, of the contract that exists between what is expected from them and from their brothers in the armed forces. Just think of British lads at this moment, fighting in the desert and what that means in the way of sacrifice; of the lads in the air force, the navy and the merchant navy.

Think of what the courageous peoples of occupied Europe are going through and daring to fight against. Every morning some foreign trade unionist goes to the execution block, others to vile concentration camps, others maimed and tortured.

Think on what the Soviet people have gone through, endured, and face this coming winter. Of what use to applaud, of what use to give medical aid, if it is done without the full recognition of the gigantic character of the sacrifice that is involved?

These are the facts upon which we have to gain the willing support of the workers. They will help place our present position in its true perspective, and that, quite bluntly, is, that a very considerable section of the British people are living in luxury compared to what either our own comrades in the armed forces of Britain or our allies all over the world are being compelled to endure as their contribution to winning the victory.

To win this victory there is no sacrifice too great to pay. We have to get this conception understood. It is an honour to suffer and sacrifice in a peoples' war. It was the capacity to do this which has made China and Spain memorable for all time. It is the capacity to do this, which has forever enshrined the Soviet people in the minds of men and women for all time.

And it can be achieved here in Britain, providing our Party goes about its job in the right way and in the right spirit, and sets the example by its own devotion to the peoples' cause.

Confidence in the Party

Finally, we call on every member of the Party to realise, as never before, their own personal responsibility. There is not one of us that does not feel stronger as a result of the celebrations of the 25th Anniversary of the Russian Revolution.

Why do we feel this? Because we know that there is no other people in the world that could have done what the Soviet people have. There is no other

country in the world that could so worthily have sustained the terrible trials that have been inflicted upon it in the course of this last seventeen months. Because we know that what has taken place, and is taking place, is the complete justification of Bolshevism, and that it is the Communist Party of the Soviet Union which is the inspiration, leadership and steel framework around which all this has been made possible over the last twenty-five years.

We therefore now go into action with a new seriousness of purpose and determination, to achieve complete unity for all the aims of the African offensive, to campaign for the Second Front in Europe all the more persistently because of the new favourable conditions that are opening out. To stimulate production to its utmost limits, to demand a unified Allied strategy and a merciless struggle against all pro-Fascist and disruptive elements, and, to achieve this, to demand the strengthening of the Government by the elimination of all incompetents and the bringing forward of new anti-fascist leaders from the ranks of the people.

To demand a settlement of the Indian question. To insist upon adequate pay, allowances and pensions for the men and women in the Armed Forces, and promotion based on merit. The strengthening of solidarity with the Soviet Peoples. The development of Unity in the Labour movement, so that a real and indestructible national unity can be established.

We appeal to every member and every organisation of our Party to campaign now for this win-the-war policy in a new way, in the spirit of Bolsheviks, confident that we can win the majority of the people for our policy and the decisive victory over Fascism.

Yours fraternally,

THE POLITICAL BUREAU.

**THE PARTY REGISTRATION
AND CLEAR CARDS**

"It should be a matter of party honour for every member of the party to hold a clear card . . ."

—Harry Pollitt.

Clear cards are especially important now, because the Party Registration, so necessary to mobilise our membership, depends on possession of a 1943 card—not obtainable until the 1942 card is clear. So—**ALL CARDS CLEAR TO THE END OF THE YEAR BY NOVEMBER 30.**

*On your own, Speaker
during the week of
Subscription*